



The Second Shift

Gallagher, C. (2019). The Second Shift: Clare Gallagher discusses her photographic research focusing on the burden of domestic labour for working women. *Visual Artists Ireland*.

[Link to publication record in Ulster University Research Portal](#)

Published in:
Visual Artists Ireland

Publication Status:
Published (in print/issue): 02/09/2019

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via Ulster University's Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The Research Portal is Ulster University's institutional repository that provides access to Ulster's research outputs. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact pure-support@ulster.ac.uk.

Publication

Source: Approaching the 100th Issue

JOHN DUNCAN OUTLINES THE EVOLUTION OF SOURCE PHOTOGRAPHIC REVIEW – A QUARTERLY PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE PUBLISHED IN BELFAST.

SOURCE PHOTOGRAPHIC REVIEW was first published in 1992. It was one of the activities of Photo Works North, a photography organisation set up by a group of predominately Belfast-based photographers, who were frustrated with the lack of opportunities and interest in photography in Ireland. Their wider aims included having a gallery and production facilities. Selling photographs through a lottery raised the organisation's initial funding. Most notable was a set of self-portraits, passport booth photographs by Lee Friedlander. Funding was later secured from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in 1993, the Arts Council of Ireland in 1998 and Belfast City Council from 2001. As things developed, activities increasingly focused on the production of Source.

I became aware of the organisation as a student studying photography, having been asked to contribute a set of slides of my work for a planned archive of Irish photography (which was fulfilled much later, as part of the Source website). Returning to Belfast after graduating, I became more actively involved in the publication, working with photographers Jim Maginn, Peter Neill, Patrick McCoy and Nicholas Allen. Paul Seawright was the editor of the first two issues and had left Belfast to lecture in Wales. The editorial meetings were in Jim's kitchen and Peter managed to do the design by using a computer at work. After the purchase of our own computer, I was charged with locating premises and setting up an office (with duties including the procurement of second-hand furniture). The chosen location of Botanic Avenue was conveniently near my paid job at the local photo lab, Quik-Snaps. Next was an induction into the world of funding applications, which involved Dadaist-style techniques of printing out text, cutting it up, and sticking it onto application forms for photocopying and hand-delivery to funders. Meeting people handing in forms at Arts Council HQ sometimes seemed like the only contact we had with others in the arts sector.

Phone, fax and the post were about as connected as it got, pre-internet. Making contact with the world of photography was a challenge. Getting on press mailing lists for the handful of photography galleries in the UK, and the Gallery of Photography in Dublin, was a first step. I was able to utilise contacts I had made while studying in Newport and Glasgow School of Art, including photographers like Jonathan Olley and writers like Ray McKenzie. I wanted to point to the wider world of photography, while drawing attention to those closer to hand. Early issues included work by people like Frankie Quinn, Abigail O'Brien, Clare Langan and Peter Richards. Reviews covered a spectrum, from Bernd and Hilla Becher, to Jo Spence and Tom Stoddart. Equally challenging was getting the publication out to readers, often involving delivering magazines from the back of a car to camera shops and venues. Distribution to Dublin involved requisitioning a shopping trolley,

to get boxes from the train to the GPO on O'Connell Street.

The core components of the magazine, portfolios, reviews and feature articles have been in place since those early issues, with the quantity and quality of writing increasing over the years. Self-published book reviews, specialist columns and more ambitious feature articles have been added along the way, along with more tightly themed issues. We have covered everything from the RUC Police Archives, to the history of paparazzi photography. Discussing work directly with photographers has been a constant activity since 1998, at various venues across the UK and Ireland. In twenty years, only one person has walked out during a discussion of their work. As a photographer myself, I hope I bring a level of understanding to the table, along with my experience as an editor.

Source's early recruitment was organic. In 1997 my now co-editor, Richard West, spotted a note from Source on the notice board at Queens University, offering work experience for students. A stint of archiving and a trial review quickly led to a role (at the time voluntary) on the editorial team. A new designer, Keith Connolly, was also recruited. The terms were an office space and computer access in return for design work. This coincided with Lottery Funding that allowed for a major redesign and the ability to print in full colour (images had been mostly black and white, up until our 1998 winter issue). Pivotal external developments included the 2001 demise of the long-running UK magazine, Creative Camera. This opened up a space in Britain for Source, both in terms of expanding our review coverage and reaching more readers and advertisers.

Over the years we have also increasingly been able to commission writers who have in-depth knowledge of photographic culture. We have published the work of photographers, ranging from recent graduates to Turner Prize winners. We have also particularly enjoyed discovering the work of independent photographers working outside the mainstream. Arriving at a portfolio day, Robin Dale laid out his medium format transparencies on a lightbox and got me to listen on headphones to accompanying sound recordings, using a silver stopwatch to prompt the slide I should look at. It remains a gold standard for those from the leftfield we hope to discover.

Trying to keep what we do interesting for our readers and ourselves has led to three major overhauls of design and reevaluations of ideas since 1998. The most recent, which took place in December 2018, is signposted by our new strap line: "Thinking Through Photography". The new design is in some ways a return to the rawness and immediacy of the publication's early years. As we approach our 100th issue, trying to discover what the field of photographic culture might be is still the adventure it was in 1994.

John Duncan is a photographer and co-editor of Source Magazine.

source.ie

Research

The Second Shift

CLARE GALLAGHER DISCUSSES HER PHOTOGRAPHIC RESEARCH FOCUSING ON THE BURDEN OF DOMESTIC LABOUR FOR WORKING WOMEN.

"Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition. The clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day" – Simone de Beauvoir¹

MY CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHIC research, titled *The Second Shift*, focuses on the hidden labour of housework and childcare, primarily carried out by women on top of their paid employment. I use photography and video to examine and respond to the ideas and practices of home which constitute the second shift. It is physical, mental and emotional labour which demands effort, skill and time, but is unpaid, unaccounted for, unequally distributed and largely unrecognised. Performing two daily shifts (one during 'leisure' hours) is the experience for the majority of working women. It also implies a hierarchy: that some people's time matters more than others. I probe the changed and potentially more fraught relationship with home that accompanies the transition to motherhood which tends to remain after the return to paid work outside the home. Hidden in plain sight and veiled by familiarity and insignificance, the second shift is largely absent from photographs of home and family. *The Second Shift* is an attempt to recognise the complexity and value of this invisible work. It is a call for resistance to the capitalist, patriarchal and aesthetic systems which ignore it.

I am a full-time lecturer, part-time researcher and mother, with two teenage sons. I started researching home in the late 2000s, as the exhaustion and delirium of mothering babies and toddlers gave way to bewilderment and frustration at the gendering of my time and opportunities in ways I had not been prepared for. In my mixed-gender state school, girls went on to study engineering, medicine and law in the same proportions as the boys. Thinking the feminist battle had been won in the 1970s, we set out with expectations of equality. Where did all the promises of parity go? Of shared parenting? If we had still managed to retain the belief in gender equality in the workforce, parenthood rapidly revealed this to be an illusion.

I made a previous body of photographs, *Domestic Drift*, when my children were small and I was utterly frazzled by the seemingly relentless demands of motherhood, the job and housework. Wishing for things to be easier, neater, sunnier, more appealing – actually, just *done* – left me struggling to reconcile my everyday life with my expectations of happy family snaps, beautiful homes and Kodak moments. I felt like me, my home, my family didn't measure up. The work became anchored in the home, in this claustrophobic, often strained and busy setting. I felt that I needed home to be clean, tidy and pleasing to be experienced properly. The fabled leisure hours, when it was all finished, would be the appropriate point at which to take it in, with all signs of mess and effort gone. However, the idea of home being the refuge from work – the place you put your feet up and crack open a cold beer – was laughable. The ordinary state certainly

didn't seem to deserve recording for posterity. By avoiding looking at home and family as a 'work-in-progress', I realised that I wasn't really seeing much of it at all – neither the dirty washing and mischievous children, nor the kind gestures and playful constructions.

To confront this tension between expectations and reality, I started photographing exactly what was in front of me, in order to see it clearly and begin to appreciate it more fully, with equanimity rather than dissatisfaction. I began to face the impossibility of getting everything done, focusing instead on the non-moments, the difficult bits, the things that either barely registered amidst the busyness or were distinctly unappealing. Using a medium format film camera with a waist-level viewfinder, I photographed things the children had left – curls of masking tape stuck on a chair after some project; toy knights invading the dishwasher; a bunch of dandelions in a tissue as an apology. I took pictures of the processes of home – debris from meals and the endless laundry. I discovered the in-between moments that revealed something of the ambiguity and ephemerality of family life. I found photography effective at revealing what was right in front of me, that I was oblivious to, in the rush to get it all done.

Domestic Drift seemed to resonate with other working mothers and struck a particularly poignant chord with those whose children were grown up. Many felt that it was the ordinary moments that they recognised the most. Yet it was also these which had vanished undocumented, in the scramble of daily life. Many were angry and the same issues came up repeatedly: the substantial hidden work they did, the ingenuity they employed, the lack of acknowledgment and the pressure they felt to maintain standards in both their professional and family lives. They asked the same questions too: How might we resist the expectations that the second shift is women's responsibility? How can we reconcile the work that we put into keeping things looking the same, with the beliefs we hold about progress? How do we point at all of this daily expenditure of time, thought and effort and say: "herein lies value"? Allen and Crow point out that "home, what it is, what it means, and how it is experienced, does not just happen". *The Second Shift* therefore considers the omission of women's domestic labour from the picture of home. Instead of hearing meaningless background noise, it finds rich significance in it. It aims to make visible what has been considered invisible – or unseeable.

Clare Gallagher is lecturer in photography at Belfast School of Art, Ulster University. Her book *The Second Shift* will be published this year.

Notes

¹Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 1949